

CLAIMS

1. Apparatus for processing communications received by a user over a communications link, which communications include identification information, the apparatus comprising:
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- (i) an input for communications;
 - (ii) extracting means for extracting identification information associated with a first communication received at the input;
 - (iii) categorising means for categorising the first communication and recommending an action based on the categorisation;

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 - (iv) means for monitoring user response to the first communication;
 - (v) modifying means for modifying the categorising means in accordance with a monitored user response to the first communication, such that when a second communication having identifying information matching that of the first communication is received, the monitored user response is recommended by the categorising means.

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2. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the extracting means includes comparing means for comparing the identification information with predetermined identification information.
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3. Apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the extracting means utilises fuzzy logic.
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4. Apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein each of the first and second communications is either one of an email or a telephone call.
5. Apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the identification information includes at least one of:
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- (a) a subject of the email;
 - (b) an address of a sender of the email;
 - (c) a recipient list of the email; and/or

(d) a calling line identifier.

6. Apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the comparing means is operable to compare any or all of:

- 5 (a) a sender with a predetermined list of senders;
(b) a recipient list with a predetermined list of recipients;
(c) a subject with a predetermined list of subjects; and/or
(d) a calling line identifier with a predetermined list of numbers.

Sub A2 70 7. Apparatus according to claim 1 or claim 6, wherein the categorising means includes a Bayes net.

8. Apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the Bayes net is operable to output an array of values indicative of a priority status for the communication.

15 Sub A3 9. Apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims, further comprising means for automatic message transmission, such that when a communication is received from a sender that has been identified for automatic message transmission, a predetermined message is automatically returned in response to the communication.
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10. A method of processing communications received by a user over a network, which communications include identification information, the method comprising the steps of:

- 25 (i) extracting the identification information of a first communication received by the user;
(ii) categorising the first communication, and recommending an action based on said categorisation;
(iii) observing an actual action of the user in response to the recommendation;
30 and
(iv) modifying parameters within the categorising means such that, upon receipt of a second communication having identical identifying information

to that of the first communication, the actual user action is recommended by the categorising means.

11. A method according to claim 10, in which said categorising step (ii) includes
5 the steps of:
- (a) propagating the first communication through the categorising means on the basis of the identification information;
 - (b) examining an output from the categorising means, which output includes an array of response identifiers corresponding to times for response; and
 - 10 (c) extracting a response identifier corresponding to the highest value in said array.
12. A method according to claim 11, in which the categorising means includes a Bayes net, which Bayes net has a weight associated with each of the
15 identification information.
13. A method according to claim 12, in which said step (iv) of modifying parameters within the categorising means includes the steps of:
- a) storing results of said observation step (iii); and
 - 20 b) changing the weights in accordance with the results.
- Sub A47 14. Apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 9, further comprising a diary for logging availability status with respect to a user, said categorising means being triggered by a received communication to review a user's availability
25 status and to base a recommended response with respect to the received communication at least in part on said availability status.
15. Apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 9, or claim 14, which further comprises means for storing user inputs with respect to extracted
30 identification information.

Sub A4 7

16. Apparatus according to either one of claims 14 or 15 wherein, in the case of at least one form of availability status, or where the stored identification information has been flagged by a user input accordingly, the apparatus triggers the recommended response of the categorising means without receiving user input.
17. A computer program comprising a set of instructions to cause a computer to perform the method according to claims 10 to 13.
18. A computer program according to claim 17 placed on a carrier, which carrier includes any one of:
- (i) a CD-ROM storage medium;
 - (ii) a hard disk drive storage medium;
 - 15 (iii) a 3.5-inch diskette storage medium;
 - (iv) a protectively-encased tape cartridge storage medium;
 - (v) a zip drive disk storage medium;
 - (vi) a jazz drive diskette storage medium;
 - (vii) an optical disk storage medium;
 - 20 (viii) auxiliary storage memory.